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THIS STORY APPEARED IN **The Boston Globe**

**In 'Long Story Short,' comedian Colin Quinn targets human nature**

January 27, 2012 | By James Sullivan

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Colin Quinn, the comedy writer, performer, and "Saturday Night Live" alum, has built his career on a witty brand of contrarian bluster. "That's my story, and I'm sticking to it," he signed off each segment when he anchored "Weekend Update," the "SNL" news spoof, in the late 1990s. On Twitter, he delights in taking one side of an issue that's bound to raise hackles, then retweeting the responders who call him an idiot.



There's a name for that trait, said Quinn, who is 52.

"They call it oppositional defiant disorder. I'm self-diagnosed," he joked.

Then, speaking by phone in his distinctive Brooklyn bark, he corrected himself. The "oppositional" attitude is inherent to comedy, he said: "You're not supposed to believe anything, really. It's all BS, or at least that's my opinion."

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That kind of broad-reaching viewpoint is taken to an extreme in "Colin Quinn: Long Story Short," which Quinn will perform Sunday evening at the Wilbur Theatre, wrapping up the third annual Magners Comedy Festival. The solo show ran for four months on Broadway in 2010-11, directed by Quinn's friend Jerry Seinfeld.

Quinn was born and raised in Brooklyn, and his parents, both teachers, occasionally took him to plays, typically by Irish writers - George Bernard Shaw, Brendan Behan. "I liked a little bit of theater," said Quinn, "but I never aspired to be on Broadway."

He's grateful for Seinfeld's involvement with "Long Story Short," which, he said, probably wouldn't have made it to Broadway without the comedy superstar's name attached. Now that Quinn has taken the show on the road - he'll play Foxwoods in February and head to California for several shows in March - he and Seinfeld "talk all the time, but not about the show."

"There's always one or two yentas after every show - 'Is Jerry here?'" he said.

Billed as a “History of the World in 75 Minutes,” “Long Story Short” traces self-defeating human behavior from the ancient Greeks and Romans through the present day. From epoch-making relations between empires to everyday encounters among individuals, he said, it all boils down to one thing: the absurd hubris of thinking we’re unique.

Whether we’re waging a “just” war or arguing with a spouse, Quinn said, the problems occur when we think the outcome will somehow vary this time. “The idea that we’re a different society - apparently we’re not, because if you read history, all the behavior is still there. Human nature hasn’t changed a bit.”

His ideas for “Long Story Short” gestated for years, but they really took hold when the United States went to war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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